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ART. III.—*Life of Henry Clay.*

Biography of Henry Clay. By GEORGE D. PRENTICE,
Esq. 12mo. pp. 304. Hartford, Conn. 1831.

In our last number we offered a succinct notice of the principal events in the life of an eminent British statesman, who has elevated himself by the mere force of talent, industry and good conduct, with little aid from favorable circumstances, and generally in opposition to the strong tide of executive and aristocratic influences, from the rank of a private citizen to the highest legal and political dignities in one of the mightiest empires of the world. We now propose to lay before our readers, a rapid sketch of the career of a not less distinguished citizen of our own country, who, in like manner, unaided by circumstances, and depending entirely on his own intellectual and moral resources, has risen from obscurity to eminence, but who, from acting in concert with prevailing parties, and in the administration of the Government, has exercised a more direct influence on the progress of affairs, and who is probably destined to reach hereafter a station of still more exalted official dignity. Such examples are among the most effective and interesting forms in which the great moral lessons that ought to regulate the practical conduct of life, can be inculcated on the community. The history of what such men have done or attempted, in promoting the great cause of improvement and human happiness, is an excellent guide to the efforts of the young and ardent, while their well-earned fame and popularity furnish the strongest incentives to persevering and vigorous exertion. Even their occasional disappointments and reverses, compensated as they have been or will be, by eventual triumph, are fraught with encouragement, inasmuch as they prove that an honest, consistent and dignified course, is, after all, the only road to ultimate success; and that the miserable, time-serving policy, which bends to every caprice of popular or princely favor, is as ineffectual for the promotion of its own selfish objects, as it is disgraceful to the sordid spirits who can stoop to practise it. The frequent contemplation of such characters improves and elevates the tone of public feeling. It represses the vulgar appetite for sensual pleasure, wealth, and the mere names of office. It makes men see and feel that there are objects in life not only more important in

themselves, but more attractive in the pursuit, and more glorious in the attainment, than any of these. It inspires the generous ambition of acquiring distinction, not by a paltry system of intrigue and party management, but by the persevering and active employment of high intellectual endowments, for the promotion of the public good. It is only by the general prevalence of such sentiments among the young and active portion of the citizens, that our republican institutions can be preserved in their present vigor and purity. They constitute that *public virtue* which has been justly described as the vital principle of popular governments,—the conservative power which alone can secure them from the abuses to which they are peculiarly prone, abuses even more frightful and disgusting than those of any other form of polity.

We deem it more especially important to hold up to the view and imitation of the public these high examples of worth and talent, at a time when there seems to be in certain quarters a disposition to discourage all exertions but those which are directed to merely selfish objects. We are sometimes told, that it is of little importance by whom the Government of the country is administered; that our political agents in the exercise of their limited powers can do but little good or harm, and that individuals may as well devote their attention exclusively to their own concerns, and leave those of the public to take care of themselves. We have heard persons of education, talent, leisure and good intentions, remark, with a sort of satisfaction, that they did not go to the polls once in three years. Such errors are dangerous, and if they became general, would be fatal to the prosperity of the country. The people of the United States have taken into their own hands the immediate superintendence of all their social and political interests. The agents of evil are always busy; the promotion of their purposes requires and produces a restless and indefatigable activity. If their efforts are not resisted by the upright and well-meaning with corresponding energy, they of course triumph, and their triumph is followed, at a greater or less interval of time, by the ruin of the community. Life is, and was intended to be, a perpetual and active warfare between the adherents of good and evil. Those, who from indolence or selfishness withdraw from the struggle, are every where the most dangerous allies of the latter party; and as they share their guilt, so they always sooner or later partake of their

reward. Their darling wealth, to the augmentation of which they sacrifice every higher consideration, is torn from them in the indiscriminate rage of civil commotion. Conscriptions, proscriptions, forced loans, political and personal persecution under the forms of law, visit them in the retirement of the compting-room and the dwelling-house, and they are crushed, at last, under the load of miseries incident to the last stages of misgovernment; all of which might, and in most cases would, have been averted, had this class of men regularly gone to the polls, while they had it in their power. Hence it was, that the Athenian lawgiver wisely ordained, that in all political divisions, every citizen should take either one side or the other; and it may be said with perfect truth, that without a pretty general observation of this principle, the forms of popular government are impracticable.

It is, therefore, of high importance, that eminent examples of public virtue should be constantly kept before the view of the people; and it is also but just to the individuals themselves, who have given these examples, that their services should be requited during their lives, at least by public acknowledgements of respect and gratitude. A citizen who devotes himself to the public service, especially in this country, is a standing mark for outrage and calumny, which are the more virulent in proportion to the purity and elevation of his character. It is the duty of those who approve his conduct, to sustain and encourage him, by express testimonials of approbation, and not to leave his vindication entirely to the slow award of posterity. For these reasons, we have deemed it proper and useful to devote a few pages to a rapid sketch of the political life of Mr. Clay. The materials for such a sketch, which are of course for the most part in possession of the public, are arranged in a methodical and agreeable form in the work before us, which also contains some interesting particulars, not so generally known, of his earlier life.

Henry Clay was born in Hanover County, Virginia, on the 12th of April, 1777. His father was a clergyman of talent and respectability. He probably superintended himself the education of his son, who had received no other public instruction than such as is afforded by the common schools, when he was placed in the office of Mr. Tinsley, Clerk of the High Court of Chancery at Richmond, Virginia. In this situation

he of course came into personal contact with the most distinguished men in the State, and attracted their attention so strongly by his talents and amiable qualities, that some of them, particularly Chancellor Wythe and Governor Brooke, persuaded him, at the age of nineteen, to undertake the study of the law. The state of society and of the bar rules at this period afforded great facilities for entering on the profession, and Mr. Clay, after a year's study, was admitted to practice at the age of twenty. He removed soon after to Lexington, Kentucky, where he has since resided. He continued his studies at this place about a year longer, and during this period exercised himself in speaking at the meetings of the Debating Society. At his first attempt he exhibited the fluency and fervor, which have since formed the character of his maturer eloquence. 'He rose,' says Mr. Prentice, 'under some embarrassment, and addressed the President of the Society by the title of *Gentlemen of the Jury*, but he gradually gained confidence from his own efforts, and, finally, concentrating all his powers upon the subject in debate, he surprised his audience with a beauty and compass of voice, an exuberance of eloquence and a force of argument well worthy of a veteran orator. A gentleman who heard this speech has assured us, that it would hardly suffer in comparison with the most brilliant efforts made by its author in after life. His reputation as a speaker was of course established, and he became immediately a leading champion in all the debates of the Society.'

The bar of Lexington was at this time highly respectable, comprehending among its members such men as George Nicholas, John Breckenridge, James Brown, James Hughes, William Murray, and several others, all of whom would have figured as leading attorneys at any Court. But, notwithstanding the number and ability of his competitors, Mr. Clay came at once into extensive practice, and was intrusted with more suits than any other practitioner. He particularly distinguished himself in the management of criminal cases, and it is remarked by his biographer, that not one of his clients was ever sentenced to death. The following anecdotes afford a striking illustration of the extent of the influence which he exercised as an advocate, even in the earlier periods of his professional career.

‘ An interesting criminal case in which Mr. Clay was engaged, was tried in Harrison County. Two Germans, father and son, had been indicted for murder, and Mr. C. was employed to defend them. The deed of killing was proved to the entire satisfaction of the Court, and was considered as an aggravated murder. The whole of Mr. C’s efforts were consequently directed, not to the entire exculpation of the defendants, but to the saving of their lives. After a warm and uninterrupted struggle of five days, he succeeded. The Jury found a verdict of manslaughter. Not satisfied with this signal triumph, Mr. C. moved an arrest of judgment, and, after another day’s contest, prevailed in this also, and, of course, the prisoners were discharged, without even the punishment of the crime of which the Jury found them guilty. During the whole of this long trial, an old, ill-favored German female, who was the wife of the elder prisoner and mother of the younger, had been sitting in one unvaried posture, watching the countenances of the Jury, and listening to the spirited contest of the counsel, though she probably understood little of the language in which it was conducted. After the success of the final motion in arrest of judgment, a gentleman, who had been observing her, approached the place where she sat, and whispered in her ear, that her husband and son were acquitted. Her sudden rapture broke over all restraint. She threw up her arms in a wild excess of joy, ran to Mr. Clay, and, clinging with desperate strength to his neck, almost smothered him with her kisses. The young advocate, no doubt, would willingly have dispensed with these tokens of female favor; but the hearts of the spectators were so touched by the contemplation of the happiness they witnessed, that, if a smile rested for one moment upon the lip, it was a smile not of derision but of sympathy.

Among the cases in which Mr. Clay distinguished himself during the early part of his legal practice, was that of Mr. Willis, a citizen of Fayette County, who, as was supposed, had committed a murder under circumstances of peculiar cruelty and cold-bloodedness. From representations made previous to the trial, Mr. C. consented to undertake his defence, and by a mighty effort, succeeded, in almost direct defiance of testimony, in creating a division of the Jury as to the nature of the defendant’s crime. This was the object at which he specifically aimed. At the next session of the Court, the Attorney for the Commonwealth moved for a *venire facias de novo*, in other words, a new trial, which was granted by the Court. Mr. Clay made no opposition to this motion, but reserved all his strength for the argument before the Jury. When his turn came for addressing them, in reply to the arguments of the Attorney for the Commonwealth, he rose, and commenced with assuming the

position, that, whatever opinion the Jury might have of the guilt or innocence of the prisoner, it was too late to convict him, for he had been *once tried*, and the law required, that no man should be put twice in jeopardy of his life for the same offence. The Court was startled at this assumption, and peremptorily prohibited the speaker from proceeding in the argument to maintain it. Mr. Clay drew himself proudly up, and remarking, that, if he was not allowed to argue the whole case to the Jury, he could have nothing more to say, made a formal bow to the Court, put his books into his green bag, and, with Roman dignity, left the hall, followed by his associate counsel. The consequence was as he had foreseen. He had not been at his lodgings more than five or ten minutes, when he was waited on by a messenger from the Court, requesting his return, and assuring him that he should be permitted to argue the case in his own way. Instantly he made his re-appearance in the hall, pressed, with the utmost vehemence, the point he had before attempted to establish, and, on the ground that his client had once been tried, prevailed on the Jury to give him his liberty, without any reference whatever to the testimony against him. Such a decision could not now be obtained in Kentucky,—and, at the period in question, was obviously contrary to law.'

Although frequently employed in criminal cases, he was, says his biographer, not less successful in civil suits. The decision and promptitude of his practice are curiously illustrated in the following anecdote.

' In suits that involved the land laws of Virginia and Kentucky, he had no rival. But it would be in vain to attempt even an enumeration of the cases, in which, during the early years of his practice, he gathered a rich harvest of gold and fame. In a short biographical notice that was given of him about three years ago, we find mention of an incident in his professional life, which was certainly a striking illustration of the rapidity of his intellectual combinations, and his power of seizing intuitively upon the strong points of a case. We give it as a single specimen of what he could do. In conjunction with another attorney of eminence, whose name we have forgotten, he was employed to argue, in the Fayette Circuit Court, a question of great difficulty,—one, in which the interests of the litigant parties were both deeply involved. At the opening of the Court, something occurred to call him away, and the whole management of the case devolved on his associate counsel. Two days were spent in discussing the points of law, which were to govern the instructions of the Court to the Jury, and on each of these

points Mr. Clay's colleague was foiled by his antagonist. At the end of the second day Mr. Clay re-entered the Court. He had not heard a word of the testimony, and knew nothing of the course which the discussion had taken, but, after holding a very short consultation with his colleague, he drew up a statement of the form in which he wished the instructions of the Court to be given to the Jury, and accompanied his petition with a few observations so novel and satisfactory, that it was granted without the least hesitation. A corresponding verdict was instantly returned by the Jury; and thus the case, which had been on the very point of being decided against Mr. Clay's client, was decided in his favor, in less than half an hour after Mr. Clay entered the Court-House.'

We pass rapidly over the professional career of Mr. Clay, and come at once to his political life, which is the chief object of the present sketch. His active concern in the affairs of his own State began almost as early as his admission to the bar. The people of Kentucky were then engaged in framing a new Constitution, and one of the features of the plan which had been submitted to them was a provision for the gradual emancipation of the slaves. In opposition to the known prejudices of a majority of the people, Mr. Clay stood forward as the ardent and vigorous advocate of this principle. His pen was busy in the journals, and his voice was fearlessly raised at public meetings in favor of the election of members of the Convention, who would procure its adoption. So early in life did he profess, in relation to this most important and delicate question, the principles to which he has ever since adhered, and which form so honorable a trait in his moral character. The advocates of an opposite system prevailed, and Mr. Clay suffered, in consequence of the part he took on this occasion, a temporary unpopularity, which was, however, removed the next year by his exertions on the popular side of the great political questions which then agitated the Union. 'A gentleman who was present at one of the public discussions of these questions, informed us,' says Mr. Prentice, 'that it would be impossible to give an adequate idea of the effect produced.' The populace had assembled in the fields in the vicinity of Lexington, and were first addressed by Mr. George Nicholas, a gentleman of distinction, and a powerful speaker. After he had finished, the name of *Clay* was shouted from all parts of the assembly. The young orator made his appearance, and, under the disad-

vantage of following so able a leader, acquitted himself with perfect success. One or two gentlemen then attempted to sustain the opposite opinion, but found some difficulty in getting a hearing. When the meeting was over, the people took Nicholas and Clay upon their shoulders, and, forcing them into a carriage, drew them through the streets with shouts of applause. This was in the year 1798, when Mr. Clay was of course twenty-one years of age. The triumph of an orator who happens to be sustaining a popular cause, is, no doubt, comparatively easy ; but it is impossible not to recognise in the facility with which Mr. Clay took his station, at so early an age, among the leading men of the State, and in the influence which he already exercised over his fellow-citizens, the result not merely of superior talent and eloquence, but of a bold and commanding energy of character, which could not fail, if at all favored by circumstances, to give him, as it has done, a place among the most distinguished statesmen of the Union.

In 1803, Mr. Clay was elected a member of the Legislature of the State. The circumstances attending his election were highly honorable to him, and evinced, like those which have just been mentioned, the strong hold which he had already obtained upon the confidence of the people. It was at that time, as it is now, the practice in Kentucky and the other Southern and Western States, for gentlemen to present themselves as candidates to the legislative bodies, and to attend at the polls and harangue the electors during the progress of the canvass. We are not sure that this method, which is also employed in the mother country, is not, on the whole, a better one than the *caucussing* system which prevails in the Northern and Middle States, and that it is not one of the reasons why the sections of the Union, in which it is in use, are, on the average, better represented than the others. The caucussing system, by reducing the effective electors to a small and secret cabal of thirty or forty persons, carries with it most of the inconveniences and abuses of the British practice of borough-mongering, while the necessity which the candidate finds himself under, on the other plan, of sustaining for two or three days before the people, the severe ordeal of an open discussion, affords some security that merit and talent will not be made to give way to imbecility, supported by management and intrigue. Be this, however, as it may, Mr. Clay, in opposition to the general practice in his own State, was

nominated in his absence, by his friends, and did not appear at the polls until nearly the close of the election. In the mean time, other candidates, of more advanced age and of higher pretensions, had offered themselves, and were busily engaged in gaining friends. On the third day, the young orator appeared upon the ground, and addressed the people with so much effect, that his election was carried by acclamation.

On his first appearance in his legislative capacity, he distinguished himself in a debate upon a question of local politics, in which he was opposed by Mr. Felix Grundy (since a conspicuous politician in the neighboring State of Tennessee and in the councils of the Union,) and carried his point against his able antagonist. About this time he acted as the leading counsel for Aaron Burr, on his trial before the District Court, and procured his acquittal. He had been induced to undertake this cause by a letter from Burr, in which he declared, in the most positive terms and on the honor of a gentleman, his entire innocence of the charges brought against him. Having afterwards ascertained, to his full satisfaction, that these charges were well founded, Mr. Clay considered himself as having cause of complaint against Burr, on account of the unequivocal assurances he had given him to the contrary, and, on meeting him accidentally in a court-room at New York, some years after, refused to take his hand when it was offered before the court and assistants. Such is the brief outline of the relations between Mr. Clay and Colonel Burr, which have sometimes been urged by the enemies of the former as a topic of reproach against him.

In the year 1806, General Adair, one of the Senators of the State in Congress, having resigned his place, Mr. Clay was elected to occupy it for the remainder of the term, which was only one year. It was in this capacity that he first appeared at Washington. At the moment of his arrival, a question was under debate respecting the expediency of authorizing the erection of a bridge over the Potomac to Georgetown, which, for reasons not mentioned by the biographer, seems to have been opposed. Mr. Clay, immediately upon taking his seat, made a brilliant and effective speech in favor of the bridge, which is said to have settled the question, the votes before having been equally divided. It is worthy of remark, that his first effort in Congress was thus made in support of the great principle of *Internal Improvement*, the favorite object of so many of his later labors. The leading question at this session of Congress,

was the suspension of the *habeas corpus* act, for the purpose of enabling the Government to arrest Colonel Burr. Considering himself as restrained by the delicacy of his position as counsel for Burr during his late trial, Mr. Clay took no part in the debate on this subject. On his return to Kentucky, after the expiration of his term in the Senate, he was immediately re-elected to the State Legislature, and at the opening of the next session was chosen Speaker of the General Assembly by a large majority, and remained in that capacity for several successive years. The peculiar talent which he displayed for the performance of the difficult and delicate functions of this office, probably contributed a good deal to his subsequent elevation to the corresponding station in the House of Representatives of the United States. He often descended from the Speaker's chair to take a part in the debates, and particularly distinguished himself at the next session after his return from Congress, by a powerful speech on a very important question connected with the administration of justice. A motion was made to prohibit the reading in court of any British decision or elementary work on law. It was understood that a large majority of the Assembly were in favor of it. Mr. Clay moved to amend the resolution by limiting it to such decisions as took place previously to the declaration of Independence, and thus leaving the common and statute law, as they stood at that period, in force. The amendment was warmly opposed, but, after a long and spirited contest, Mr. Clay prevailed. By his efforts on this occasion, he no doubt rendered a great and permanent service to the State of Kentucky. As he has been sometimes represented by his enemies as a mere demagogue, whose only means of producing effect was to join and lead in the popular clamor of the day, it may be proper to remark, in connexion with this subject, that, from the commencement of his political career up to the present time, his greatest efforts have been made as frequently in opposition to, as in concurrence with the popular feeling, and apparently in both cases with equal success. We have seen, that his first appearance in Kentucky in the political field, was in the character of an advocate of the unpopular doctrine of the emancipation of the slaves. On the occasion just mentioned, he placed himself in direct opposition to the popular sentiment. In the subsequent party division between the friends of the Old and New Court, which for so many years disturbed the State, Mr. Clay acted in like manner

with the party which was considered unpopular, but which he finally sustained by his great eloquence and talent against all opposition. Lastly, on the interesting occasion of the election of President of the United States by the House of Representatives, in 1825, he employed his influence, and gave his vote in favor of the candidate who might have been fairly considered as the least popular of the three, whose names were before the House. These remarkable cases, occurring at different periods in the course of his life, sufficiently evince that in the regulation of his political conduct, he has been governed by fixed principles, and not by a selfish regard for temporary popularity.

The account given in the work before us of the speech of Mr. Clay in support of the Common Law, on the occasion just mentioned, is highly interesting, and affords another striking illustration, in addition to those already given, of the prodigious effect which at this period of his life attended the displays of his eloquence. It may also convey some useful lessons to those persons among us, who are rather too fond of declaiming against all existing institutions, and representing respect for antiquity as a mere prejudice. Respect for antiquity, although, like every other principle, it may be occasionally abused, and although it must be sometimes superseded in practice by other considerations of more immediate urgency, is doubtless one of the most correct and wholesome, as it is also one of the most natural motives of conduct. Those who represent it as a dangerous prejudice, only show that they have yet to learn the elements of political science.

‘ This effort of Mr. Clay has justly been considered by himself and his friends as one of the greatest intellectual achievements of his life. The prejudices of the multitude against the common law are almost universal; and at the time of which we have spoken, they existed in Kentucky in all their strength. The common people have heard, that this law, consisting as it does of all the reported decisions of the British courts, fills hundreds of volumes, and they do not readily comprehend how the men of the present day can become acquainted with it, and much less give it a practical application in this country. They are apt to look upon it as a mere shapeless mass of incongruities and absurdities, that has been accumulating for years and centuries. They imagine that it is half made up of frivolous precepts and ludicrous distinctions, which have no better effect than to set common sense and common justice at nought, by the conviction

of the innocent, and the discharge of the guilty. They are not aware that the common law is the embodied wisdom of ages, and that, although it may appear irregular at first view, it will be seen, when viewed in the light of a few plain principles, to be a system of unrivalled symmetry, beauty, and magnificence. They do not know, that its fundamental rules are so simple and well established, that the most unlettered can readily learn them, but suppose that the whole system, ancient and mighty as it is, might advantageously give place to a few hasty statutes devised by the discordant spirits of a State Legislature. It was against such prejudices and such misapprehensions, that Mr. Clay was obliged to contend, and he did it with a power of argument and eloquence, that almost surprised himself. He did not "check his strength in mid volley,"—the whole was put forth, for the time demanded it. In portraying that spirit of Vandalism, which mocks at the wisdom of the "world's grey fathers," and would wantonly make wreck of a system fraught with the intellectual wealth of centuries, and whelm its last fragment beneath the wave, Mr. Clay was great beyond expression. A gentleman, who was in the lobby of the House, and who has since risen to distinction, has averred, that all his subsequent ideas of perfect eloquence have been formed upon that one model. It surpassed any thing which he has since heard or had before conceived. Every muscle of the orator's face was at work, his whole body seemed agitated, as if each part were instinct with a separate life, and his small white hand, with its blue veins apparently distended almost to bursting, moved gracefully, but with all the energy of rapid and vehement gesture. The appearance of the speaker seemed that of a pure intellect wrought up to its mightiest energies, and brightly glowing through the thin and transparent veil of flesh that enrobed it. Our informant represents himself as having gazed upon the orator, and listened to his moving and impetuous eloquence, till he half lost his sense of individual existence, and, on the first return of perfect consciousness, he found that tears, in spite of his manhood, were streaming down his cheeks. Ashamed of his weakness, and unaware that nearly the whole audience was in the same situation with himself, he dried his tears, and, with feelings partially indurated by resolution, again gave his attention to the speaker. In a few moments, he found that the waters of emotion had gushed out anew from their fountain, and he now suffered them to flow uncontrolled, for he saw that he wept not alone. This great effort of Mr. Clay was materially different from those of more modern date. It was probably accompanied by a degree of physical exertion, which, in his recent condition of bodily debility, he would have been unable to endure even for a short period of time.'

In the year 1809, Mr. Thruston, another Senator in Congress, having resigned his place, Mr. Clay was called upon to occupy it for the remainder of his term, which was two years, and took his seat accordingly in the Senate at the close of that year. As the first speech which he had made during his former service as Senator, was in favor of *Internal Improvement*, so it happened, by a rather singular coincidence, that the first which he made during his second term was in support of the encouragement and protection by Government of *domestic manufactures*. The hostile attitude assumed by some of the great foreign powers towards the United States, had at this time induced our leading politicians to calculate the probability of war, and to see the necessity of making preparations for it in advance. With this general purpose, a bill was brought into the Senate to appropriate a sum of money for procuring supplies of cordage, sail-cloth, and other articles of use in war. During the progress of this bill through its different stages, an amendment was proposed, providing that a preference should be given to articles of American growth and manufacture, wherever it could be done without material detriment to the public service. At the present day, when the great advantages resulting from the possession of home manufactures are so generally admitted, it will hardly be thought possible that such a proposition should have been resisted, and least of all by the representatives of this quarter of the Union. The amendment was, however, urgently opposed by a Senator from Massachusetts, and a long debate ensued upon the general question of the expediency of the protecting policy, in which Mr. Clay maintained the same opinions which he has ever since supported with so much zeal, talent, and success, as to have acquired the honorable title of the Father of the American System. We shall presently advert again to this subject, and will only now remark, that it is curious, on looking back to this debate, to find how completely the original objections to the protecting policy have been abandoned, and others taken up, which were not then thought of. The objections which were urged at this period, were founded in the supposed unfavorable influence of manufactures, as an occupation, upon the morals of the persons engaged in them, as evinced by the corrupt state, in this respect, of the manufacturing establishments of the old countries. Experience has long since shown the error of this supposition, and the opponents of the protecting policy, abandoning every

other ground, have for some time past entrenched themselves on that of unconstitutionality, which was never suggested until the year 1824, when the system had already in its favor a prescription of thirty years, enough of itself to settle the principle, if there is ever to be any thing settled in the practice of the Government. It is also curious to see how completely the geographical character of the parties respectively sustaining, and opposing the protecting policy, has changed since this time. It was then opposed by the Eastern States, who thought they saw their interest in an exclusive devotion to navigation; and was sustained with great vigor by the South. It is now as vigorously sustained in the East, where the people have learned to understand better the true principles of their own prosperity, and resisted by the South with the same zeal with which it was formerly supported there. Would it be too uncharitable to suggest, that the lines of policy pursued by the South at these two periods,—directly opposed as they are to each other,—may be reconciled by attributing the adoption of them, in part at least, to the jealousy of Northern influence, which has sometimes, perhaps unjustly, been supposed to prevail in some other sections of the Union.

The subject had not, however, at this time obtained the importance in public opinion, which has since been attached to it. The leading questions of the two sessions of 1810 and 1811, were the occupation of West Florida and the renewal of the charter of the Bank. Our confined limits prevent us from entering in detail upon these subjects, of which the former has since, in the progress of events, lost its importance, while the latter is again at this moment, and is likely to be for several years to come, one of the most important subjects of public discussion. On this and all the other topics that came before the Senate, Mr. Clay distinguished himself as one of the leading members of that body, and one of the most effective champions of the party then in power. At this time, he opposed the re-chartering of the Bank. When the question of establishing another came up five years after, he used his influence in favor of it. How far this apparent inconsistency is to be accounted for by a change of opinion, and how far by the difference between the principles on which the two Banks were respectively constituted, is an inquiry into which we have not space to enter, and which, as there can be no suspicion in either case of any improper motive, is of no import-

ance. Mr. Clay is understood to be at present in favor of sustaining the Bank on the same footing on which it was re-organized in 1818, and has ever since existed with so much benefit to the country. On the expiration of his term of service in the Senate in 1811, he returned to Kentucky, and was immediately after elected a member of the House of Representatives of the United States, where he took his seat in the winter of the same year.

Mr. Clay was at this time about thirty-five years of age, a period of life when the intellectual powers of most men have just attained their full maturity, and are beginning to mark out for them the place which they are to occupy in the opinion of the world. So much, however, had Mr. Clay anticipated the usual progress, and such already was the extent of his influence, not merely in his own State, but on the wider theatre of national politics, that, on his first appearance as a new member in the House of Representatives, he was chosen Speaker by a vote of nearly two to one over two opposing candidates. No mark of respect and confidence at all equal to this has ever been bestowed by the House of Representatives upon any other person, and the best proof that it was not the result of any combination of accidental circumstances or momentary caprice, is to be found in the fact, that the confidence thus bestowed was never afterwards withdrawn or shaken. During the long period of Mr. Clay's congressional career, which lasted, with two short intervals, from this time till his entrance into the Department of State in 1825, he was regularly elected Speaker of each successive House of Representatives, we believe, without opposition. It is admitted, in fact, by all, that in discharging the arduous and honorable duties of this place, he was singularly successful. Though eminently prompt, firm, and decisive, the frankness and urbanity of his manner prevented any one from taking offence, and rendered him a general favorite. The place of Speaker, when occupied by a person whose talents and character qualify him to do it justice, is one of the most important stations in the Government. It does not, according to the practice of our legislative assemblies, preclude the person holding it from taking an active part in the debates of the House. Indeed, his influence in debate is increased by the consideration which attaches itself to his ordinary functions. These, on the other hand, including as they do the appointment of committees, and the regulation of

the course of proceedings, give him to a certain extent the control of the whole business, that is, of the whole legislation of the country. The public opinion respecting the comparative importance of particular official stations in our Government, is determined in part by that which prevails in Europe concerning the corresponding ones abroad. But where the essential principles of Government are different, the same names and forms do not always indicate the same things; and when the importance of our various political stations shall have been settled, as it eventually must be, by their ascertained influence in practice, it will probably be understood that the Speaker of the House of Representatives is second in political consequence only to the President of the United States. Such at all events may be, and has been his position, when his personal qualifications have enabled him to bring out fully into view the capacities belonging to the post which he occupies.

There is commonly in all countries some one person, who at each particular period, gives for the time being by the force of his own character, or the weakness of those on whom he operates, an impulse to the progress of political affairs. It does not always happen, that the highest ostensible functionary is also the actual director. In the corrupt courts of the old world, and we wish we could say that this state of things is exclusively confined to them, the main-spring of the political machine is sometimes to be found in the *bureau* of some nameless subaltern, or perhaps in the *boudoir* of a female of doubtful character. In England and this country, where the road to public employment is open to all, and where the public business is transacted in the broad daylight of a free press, such cases are necessarily rare; and in general the talent which enables the individual to give a direction to the public policy, will also place him in some high and responsible office. After the triumph of the democratic party in 1800, Mr. Jefferson was the active and ostensible leader while he remained in office, and Mr. Madison after him exercised the same influence. That of Mr. Monroe was less decisive, and in his hands the office of President lost some of its importance. From the time when Mr. Clay was elected to the House of Representatives, and especially after his return from Europe, at the close of the war, until his retirement from political affairs, in 1825, he may perhaps be fairly considered as having been the most influential statesman in the country. During

the war, and while Mr. Madison was in office, Mr. Clay was the acknowledged leader in the House of Representatives, and of course exercised more influence than any other person in giving effect to the plans of the Government. Randolph had appeared on the same theatre a few years before with extraordinary brilliancy, and had he pursued a steady and consistent course, would probably from his more advanced age, and equal if not superior natural powers, have taken the lead out of Mr. Clay's hands. But the wayward and capricious temperament of this singular personage threw him almost immediately out of the sphere of useful activity, and degraded him for life from the station of a political leader to that of a sort of Ishmael, whose hand was against every man, and every man's hand against him. Mr. Clay assumed at once the direction which might have fallen into Mr. Randolph's hands, and as we remarked above, exercised from that time forward, more influence than any other person in the House of Representatives. This too, was probably the time when his eloquence had reached its highest degree of perfection, and being also put forth under greater excitement, exhibited itself in speeches which have not been surpassed or perhaps equalled by any of those of subsequent date. But although his influence in carrying into effect the plans of Government was of this decisive nature, his personal responsibility for the character of these measures is less complete, than for those which were adopted after his return from Europe. Our controversies with foreign powers and among ourselves, which grew out of the French revolution, and terminated in the war with England, had assumed a definite form before the entrance of Mr. Clay into public life. The share which he took in them was determined of course by circumstances in part accidental, and while these controversies lasted, his course, however brilliant and elevated, was regulated by impulses which had been given ten or fifteen years earlier, and before he commenced his political career. It is only for the great measures, which have constituted the prominent features of the policy of the country from the conclusion of peace up to the present day, and to which we shall immediately advert, that Mr. Clay is individually responsible. These measures are important innovations or improvements on the preceding policy of the country, proposed by himself, and recommended to public favor chiefly by the effect of his talent and influence.

His warmest friends need not fear to stake his reputation as a statesman upon the judgment which his contemporaries and impartial posterity have formed and will form upon the character of these measures.

For this reason, as well as from a want of space to enlarge upon every portion of a long and eventful life, we shall refrain from following in detail the course of the debates upon the declaration and conduct of the war. When we now look back to this stormy period, although we cannot but regret the occasional exhibition, on all sides, of intemperance, degenerating sometimes into personal outrage, we have yet reason to be proud, as Americans, of the manner in which these great affairs were conducted, and must admit that the prominent statesmen of the day displayed powers corresponding with the importance of the crisis at which they were called to act. Clay, Calhoun, and Cheves, on one side, Randolph, Webster, and Quincy, on the other, with their respective associates, composed an array of talent, which has rarely been assembled, at the same time, within the walls of any deliberative body. The debates were conducted, as all will recollect, with great violence. Charges of corruption, foreign influence and personal malignity, were bandied about with a good deal of freedom. Mr. Clay was the acknowledged leader of the democratic party, took an active part in all the principal debates, and sustained his opinions with the warmth and zeal that are natural to his character; but such was the kindness and frank urbanity of his manner, that he seems to have retained, without diminution, the respect and esteem of the House. At the beginning of the year 1814, he was appointed one of the Commissioners to treat for peace with Great Britain, and having accepted the trust, retired, of course, from the Speaker's chair. The circumstances attending his resignation, which are stated in the following extract, strongly evince the extent of his influence over his political associates, and his general popularity with the members of all parties.

'The official duties which now devolved upon Mr. Clay, required him to resign the Speaker's chair. At this time, his influence in the House of Representatives was equal to that which he had exercised, some years before, in the Legislature of his adopted State. His friends and his enemies agree in the remark, that his power was almost unlimited. His party was a majority in the House, and, so unbounded was the confidence

which its members reposed in his wisdom and integrity, that he could sway them by a motion of his hand. Whenever the course of a discussion failed to meet his approbation, he descended from the chair, and, by mingling in the debate, gave, at once, a new character to the proceedings. His resignation was tendered on the sixteenth of January, and accompanied by a beautiful and affecting speech, which touched every heart in the assembly, and unsealed many a fountain of tears. In the generous feelings of the hour, even the federalists wept freely, that a master-spirit was going out from among them. A resolution, thanking him in fervid language for the impartiality with which he had administered the arduous duties of office, was passed almost unanimously ; —only eight or nine members voting against it. Probably there was no other man in the nation, who, at that stormy period, could have presided with such signal energy over the deliberations of the popular branch of Congress, and yet have commanded the approbation of so vast a majority of both political parties.'

The leading part in the conduct of the negotiations with Great Britain, which terminated in the treaty of Ghent, devolved, of course, upon the veteran diplomatist who was placed at the head of the commission, and it is therefore unnecessary to our present purpose to enlarge upon this subject. A difference of opinion is understood to have existed between Messrs. Adams and Clay, on some of the topics of minor importance, which came under discussion. This fact, taken in connexion with the extraordinary harmony which prevailed between them throughout the whole of the last administration, serves to show how easily men who have the good of the country at heart, can overlook those inferior considerations, of a merely private character, which so often distract the councils of selfish politicians. During his absence on this business, Mr. Clay visited several of the most interesting parts of Europe, and received every where the attention to which his reputation and official character entitled him, and which the warmth and frankness of his manners were so well fitted to secure. On his return to the United States, he was greeted with great enthusiasm, particularly in his own State. He had been re-elected to Congress, during his absence, but some doubts having been raised,—very unnecessarily as it would seem,—respecting the legality of this choice, another was ordered, which resulted in a similar expression of the feelings of his constituents.

From this time, until his retirement from public life, Mr. Clay, as we have already remarked, may be regarded as the leading statesman in the councils of the Union. The principal objects of our foreign and domestic policy, during this period, were the establishment of our relations with the emancipated Spanish Colonies, and the prosecution with increased vigor and energy of the system of protecting domestic manufactures, and developing the resources of the country by judicious plans of internal improvement, which had been acted on, to a greater or less extent, ever since the adoption of the Constitution, but of which the expediency had been more urgently pressed upon the public attention, by the experience of the late war. In the series of measures adopted in reference to both these objects, Mr. Clay took the lead, and carried the country along with him. On other questions of high importance, but of an incidental character and passing interest, such as those which grew out of the admission of the State of Missouri into the Union, and the election of Mr. Adams to the Presidency by the House of Representatives, we find him acting the same prominent part. These are the measures for which we consider him as fully responsible, and they are sufficient to establish his reputation as a bold, far-sighted, judicious, and high-minded statesman. It is indeed remarkable, that notwithstanding the persevering obloquy, with which Mr. Clay has been assailed by adherents of the party which came into power on his retirement from the administration, this party have not thought it expedient to deviate, in regard to the two great systems of measures alluded to, from the line of policy which he had marked out; so that he may be said with propriety, to govern, as it were, in spite of themselves, from the depth of his retirement, the councils of his opponents. Without pursuing chronologically the course of Mr. Clay, during the period now under consideration, we shall advert successively, in a cursory manner, to the part he took in reference to the several subjects above alluded to, and first, the establishment of our relations with the Spanish American Colonies.

The emancipation of these Colonies was one of the most remarkable results of the new direction, which had been given to the course of political affairs by our own revolution, and constituted of itself a very critical epoch in the history of the Christian world; the whole importance of which, as of all other really momentous events, will not be apparent until the

lapse of time has given them their full developement. To this country it was particularly interesting. It opened to our commerce the ports of a vast continent, with its dependant islands, situated in our immediate neighborhood, already extensively peopled and cultivated, and capable of increasing its resources to an indefinite degree, which had been hitherto closed by the commercial monopoly of the mother country. Politically viewed, it entirely changed our position in the commonwealth of nations. Instead of being an isolated power, separated from every other by a thousand leagues of ocean, we were to have in future a number of independent States at our own doors, with which our relations would, of course, be hostile or friendly, according to the degree of judgment with which they were in the first place established. The task of forming these relations, which devolved upon the Government immediately after the close of the war with England, was, therefore, one of extreme delicacy and high importance. The manner in which it was executed does great credit to the individuals, who exercised at this time the greatest influence in the executive and legislative departments. Although the advantages which were naturally to be expected from the judicious and generally successful conduct of the negotiations on this subject, have not yet been fully realized, in consequence of various untoward events occurring in the new States, the correctness of the line of policy pursued by this country is not the less certain, and the proceedings of the Government in relation to it will form one of the most honorable chapters in our political history.

Had the principles of the old diplomacy of Europe, which considered neighboring nations as naturally hostile to each other, been adopted among us, we should have expected to find in the nations formed out of the Spanish Colonies, a cluster of enemies and rivals, and should, probably, have attempted to prevent their emancipation. Such was in fact the policy recommended to us by the great powers of Europe. The people of the United States, and the Government which represented them, pursued a more generous, and doubtless, in the end, a far more advantageous course. They sincerely sympathized with communities situated precisely as we had been half a century before, and evidently acting under the influence of our example. A disposition was exhibited from the first in all quarters to afford our struggling neighbors all the

countenance which could be granted to them, consistently with prudence and our obligations to Spain. It was natural, however, for the Government to hold itself a little in the rear of public opinion. It was proper that the people should express themselves in clear and decisive language, before the Executive took the decisive step of a formal acknowledgement of the independence of the new States. In the work of maturing and expressing the public opinion upon this great question, Mr. Clay was, undoubtedly, far more active and efficient than any other person in the country. As early as the year 1817, President Monroe had despatched Commissioners for the purpose of ascertaining and reporting upon the situation of Spanish America. This was intended as a preliminary measure to the formation of our relations with the new States. The next winter, when the Appropriation Bill was before the House, Mr. Clay moved to amend it by inserting an article, providing for the salary of a Minister Plenipotentiary to the United Provinces of the Rio de la Plata, and accompanied his proposition with a powerful speech in support of an immediate recognition of the independence of that Government. The feelings of the House were not yet prepared for this measure, and the amendment was rejected by a large majority. Not discouraged by this result, Mr. Clay renewed his motion in the next Congress, and, after a warm debate of two or three weeks, in which he exhibited anew the vast and various resources of his eloquence, succeeded in carrying it by a handsome majority. This expression of the opinion of Congress was followed at once by decisive action on the part of the Executive. Five Ministers Plenipotentiary were immediately appointed to the principal Spanish American States, and the line of policy then entered upon has since been pursued with undeviating steadiness by all branches of the Government, excepting so far as the proceedings of the Executive were paralyzed for a short time by the impolitic opposition made in the Senate to the appointment of a Minister to the Congress of Panama. No inconvenience was found to result from the course adopted. Spain, who might have found a pretext in it for making war upon us, contented herself with an empty protest; England soon after followed our example. The great continental powers, who had at one time contemplated an avowed interference in favor of Spain, concluded to abandon the project, and the crisis passed off in the most satisfactory way. Spain

has not yet made up her mind to give in a formal adhesion to the new state of things ; but after the delay, which in all important matters is considered essential to the dignity of that ceremonious Government, must finally, though perhaps too late to secure any of the advantages, which would have attended an earlier acknowledgement, take this step, and thus put the last finish to the fabric of American independence.

A celebrated British statesman, who had directed the proceedings of his Government upon this subject, remarked some years after in a public speech in allusion to them, that he had 'called a new world into existence.' This was a boast somewhat too bold and large to be made with propriety by any mere mortal in respect to this, or any other great movement in the political world. The revolutions of empires,—those tremendous moral tornadoes, that change the aspect of whole continents and affect the interests of millions of men,—can never be the results of the agency of single individuals. They are always the fruits of deeply seated, slowly working, general causes, and all that the highest efforts of individual action can effect, is to modify, in some degree, their outward forms. The emancipation of Spanish America was an event of which it is easy to trace the origin, and which was in fact foreseen and announced in 1783 by the ministers of Charles III., as one of the necessary consequences of our Revolution. The most that any individual of the present age could do, was to exercise influence, more or less decisive, in fixing the precise time and circumstances of its occurrence. The person whose influence was, in fact, most sensibly felt in this way, and who, if any one, may be said to have called a new world into existence, was not George Canning, but Henry Clay. His exertions gave its character to the policy of the United States, which again operated powerfully, if not decisively, in determining that of Great Britain and the Continental allies, and thus settling the whole question. The services of Mr. Clay have been accordingly acknowledged with enthusiastic gratitude by the patriots of Spanish America. His speeches in Congress were repeatedly read at the head of their armies, and the thanks of their Legislative Assemblies were publicly offered him on several occasions. Among the various testimonies of approbation bestowed upon his course on this subject, one of the most emphatic and honorable proceeded from an eminent citizen of this Commonwealth.

Some time after the event we have just noticed, in the year 1825, a Representative in Congress from a Southern State, who had been from the beginning violently opposed to the recognition of the independence of Spanish America, thought proper to allude in terms of severe censure to the influence which Mr. Clay had exercised in their behalf. His remarks upon this subject drew from Mr. Webster the following powerful and pointed reply.

‘ Pains have been taken to prove, that the whole policy of our Government respecting South America, is the unhappy result of the influence of a gentleman formerly filling the chair of this House. To make out this, reference has been made to certain speeches of that gentleman delivered here. He is charged with having become himself affected, at an early day, with the “South American fever,” and with having infused its baleful influence into the whole councils of the country. If, Sir, it be true, that that gentleman, prompted by an ardent love of civil liberty, felt, earlier than others, a proper sympathy for the struggling Colonies of South America; or that, acting on the maxim, that revolutions do not go backward, he had the sagacity to see, earlier than others, the successful termination of those struggles; if, thus feeling and thus perceiving, it fell to him to lead the willing or unwilling councils of his country in her manifestations of kindness to the new government, and in her seasonable recognition of her independence; if it be this, which the honorable member imputes to him,—if it be by this course of public conduct, that he has identified his own name with the cause of South American liberty, he ought to be esteemed one of the most fortunate men of the age. If all this be as is now represented, he has acquired fame enough. It is enough for any man thus to have connected himself with the greatest events of the age in which he lives, and to have been foremost in measures, which reflect high honor on his country in the judgment of mankind. Sir, it is always with great reluctance, that I am drawn to speak, in my place here, of individuals; but I could not forbear what I have now said, when I hear in the House of Representatives, and in the land of free spirits, that it is made matter of imputation and reproach, to have been first to reach forth the hand of welcome and of succor to new-born nations, struggling to obtain and to enjoy the blessings of liberty.’

But whatever glory may hereafter attach to the name of Mr. Clay on account of the share which he has had in the promotion of Spanish American independence, he has acquired a still

stronger claim to the gratitude of his countrymen of this and future generations, by his vigorous, persevering, and successful exertions in the cause of Internal Improvement, and the encouragement of domestic industry. The appropriate appellation of the *Father of the American System*, which, as we remarked above, has been bestowed upon him by the country as a reward for these exertions, will remain like that of the *Author of the Declaration of Independence*, which Mr. Jefferson wished to have inscribed on his tomb-stone, a permanent and substantive distinction of the most honorable character, when the empty titles of the Old World, and even the official dignities of the New, will no longer be valued or even understood. The establishment of the American System was, in fact, neither more nor less than the completion of the great work of the emancipation of the country, which had been so happily commenced by the patriots of the Revolution. They secured to us the form of political independence; but 'the true sovereigns of a country,' as is well observed by one of our highest literary authorities, 'are those who determine its mind, its modes of thinking, its tastes, its principles.' While we neglected the developement of our resources, and looked to the mother country as the standard of opinion and usage in morals, politics, and all the departments of public and private economy, our national existence was a mere name, and for all substantial purposes, we were as much colonies as before. It is only by establishing at home our workshops in all the departments of useful and ornamental labor, and, especially, the literary and scientific institutions, which are the great laboratories of thought, that we have really become, or are fast becoming, an independent people. The statesman, who has had the honor of connecting his name with this change in the condition of the country, may justly be regarded as the second founder of our national independence.

The first of the two great divisions of this system, which seriously engaged the attention of the Government, was that of Internal Improvement; by which phrase, although it is, of course, susceptible of a much larger application, has been generally intended the construction of roads and canals, and the clearing away of obstructions in the channels of the water-courses. The *expediency* of carrying into effect a system of measures of this description was early perceived by the Government, and has never been disputed by any person or party;

it has also been pretty generally felt, that the business could not be left entirely to the States or to individuals, but that the co-operation of the General Government was, in many of its most important parts, absolutely necessary. The principal question on this branch of the subject has therefore been, whether the Government might go on under the Constitution, as it now stands, and make such internal improvements as might appear expedient, or whether it was necessary, in the first place, to obtain an amendment, conferring a specific authority for this purpose. This may appear at first view a comparatively unimportant difference, but, considering the difficulty, and, in fact, impossibility of carrying through any amendment of much importance, and which affects a variety of interests, the question was the same under another form, as whether the General Government should or should not take any part in the work of Internal Improvement.

Mr. Jefferson, though strongly in favor of the general principle, inclined to the negative on the point of constitutional authority, and contemplated the necessity of an amendment. Mr. Madison's course was somewhat singular. In his message at the opening of the session of Congress of 1816—17, he 'particularly invited their attention to the expediency of *exercising their existing powers*, and, when necessary, of resorting to the prescribed mode of enlarging them, in order to effectuate a comprehensive system of roads and canals, such as will have the effect of drawing more closely together every part of our country by promoting intercourse and improvement, and by increasing the share of every part in the common stock of national prosperity.' In pursuance of this recommendation, Congress, a short time before its adjournment, (on the motion of Mr. Calhoun) passed a bill, appropriating for purposes of Internal Improvement, the *bonus* which was to be paid to the General Government by the Bank of the United States, and sent it to the President for his signature on the last day but one of the session. A rumor was soon spread that Mr. Madison intended to return the bill to the House with his *veto*. Mr. Clay, on hearing this, immediately addressed to him a letter, in which he urged him not to reject the bill, but rather,—if he could not conscientiously sign it,—to leave the matter open to his successor, who was to be inaugurated on the following day. Mr. Madison,—in the discharge of what he no doubt believed a positive duty,—returned the bill on the last day of his ad-

ministration, with a message, in which he stated his belief, that the General Government had not the constitutional power to make internal improvements. Whether he had changed his opinion subsequently to the opening of the session, or whether he had in some way reconciled in his own mind the tenor of his opening and closing messages, are points which we need not here examine. The course of his successor was, probably, somewhat influenced by these proceedings. It is understood, that Mr. Monroe had included in the draft of his inaugural speech, a strong and unqualified recommendation of internal improvements under the authority of the General Government; but that after reading Mr. Madison's message, he was induced, whether from deference to his authority or acquiescence in his reasoning, to modify what he had written, and present his views in the qualified form in which they appear in the published speech. In the interval between his inauguration and the opening of the next session of Congress, he had made up his mind, that the exercise of the power in question was not authorized by the Constitution, and declared in his message, that he should put his negative upon any bill that might be passed for this purpose. His opinions seem to have subsequently undergone another change. In a long and argumentative message, which he addressed to Congress in the session of 1824—5, he took the singular, and plainly untenable ground, that Congress could appropriate money for making internal improvements, but that the money so appropriated could only be expended under the direction of the State Governments. Mr. Monroe's course on this subject during his administration, though uncertain and vacillating, was, therefore, on the whole, unfavorable to the adoption by Congress of a system of Internal Improvement.

The friends of this great measure, like those of Spanish American Independence, were therefore compelled, in the first instance, to encounter the opposition of the Executive department of the Government, which represented at this time a party completely predominant through the whole country. In both cases, Mr. Clay was the principal champion, and had the honor in both of carrying his measures against this powerful counteracting influence. The general outline of the argument is, probably, familiar to most of our readers. It was admitted, on both sides, that the power was not specifically given by the Constitution, and also that Congress had, in addition to the

powers specifically given, the right of making all laws 'necessary and proper for carrying these powers into effect.' The question was, whether the making of internal improvements, and particularly the laying out of roads and canals, was an exercise of power necessary and proper for carrying into effect any of the specific powers granted by the Constitution. Mr. Clay contended, that it was necessary and proper for carrying into effect the power to establish post-offices and post-roads, and also the power to raise armies and carry on war. This proposition seems, in fact, to be almost too plain for argument. It was, however, asserted by the champions of the opposite opinion, that though, perhaps, convenient for these purposes, it was not indispensably and absolutely necessary. The General Government, instead of laying out new roads, might order the mail to be carried over those which had been laid out by the States, and where there were none, it was natural to suppose that no mail was wanted. The clauses of the Constitution conferring power on the General Government, are to receive the strictest possible construction, and on such a construction, it is evident, that the power now claimed is not to be deduced from them. Such was the logic of the party opposed to improvement. The obvious and unanswerable reply to it was, that the language of the Constitution in all its parts is to receive neither a strict nor a latitudinarian, but a fair and natural construction, and that the general clause alluded to above, when construed in this way, evidently authorizes laws that are suitable and convenient for carrying into effect the great objects of the Government, even though they may not be indispensably necessary.

The objection was, therefore, entirely untenable. It appears to have been suggested, under an honest conviction that a strict construction of the Constitution is essential to the preservation of the liberty of the citizens. It was supposed, that the assumption by the General Government of a power in any way questionable, was a step towards consolidation, and one that threatened the subversion of our free institutions. This view of the subject is continually pressed upon the public mind, no doubt with good intentions, but with very injurious effects. The impression made by it has repeatedly been fatal to plans of acknowledged utility; and has produced at times an almost feverish excitement in particular sections of the country, as, for example, at present in South Carolina. It seems to us to

involve an important error, the nature of which we shall attempt very briefly to indicate.

The General Government is, undoubtedly, a Government of limited powers, which are distinctly defined in the Constitution, and it is highly proper and expedient, that the various departments of the Government should keep themselves strictly within the line of their respective authorities, according to a fair and natural construction of the terms of the instrument. But we hold it to be quite apparent, that no assumption by the General Government of powers not granted by the Constitution, can be in any way dangerous to the liberty of the citizens or to the preservation of our institutions, for the plain reason, that the only powers of which the use or abuse can ever be dangerous to liberty, are directly and specifically granted. These are the powers of levying taxes, raising armies, and carrying on war. The purse and the sword are the only instruments that are wanted or can ever be employed for the accomplishment of any ambitious purpose. Having abandoned these to the discretion of the General Government, with what propriety can we apprehend danger from the exercise by that Government of the power of founding a University,—establishing a bank,—laying out a road, or building a bridge? This would be about as reasonable, as if a lady, who had granted to one of her admirers the name and essential privileges of a husband, should afterwards consider it hazardous, on the score of delicacy, to accompany him on a journey, or take his arm in a public walk. Did Cæsar, Cromwell, or Bonaparte, subvert the institutions of their respective countries by establishing banks or laying out roads? We have no desire that these or any other powers should be exercised by the General Government, unless they are deducible from the Constitution by a fair and natural construction of its terms; but we say, that whether they are, or are not exercised by the Government, is a matter of perfect indifference to the liberty of the people. The abuse of powers acknowledged to be granted, and not the assumption of such as are doubtful, is the real source of danger. The clamor, which is occasionally raised about the encroachments of the Federal Government, too often serves, if it be not intended, to divert the public attention from the real existing evil of *mal-administration*. The truth is, that the Constitution gives, and was designed to give to the General Government, all the ordinary political powers that are not

inconsistent with the form of a Republic. It gives, in the first place in terms, the great substantial powers, which may be said to compose the essence of all government, and which are those of laying taxes, carrying on war, administering justice, and making appointments ; and then, after specifying various others of less importance, it finally gives the power of making all laws necessary and proper for carrying those powers into effect. It is difficult to conceive of any measure in itself expedient, and not prohibited by express restrictions, that may not constitutionally be adopted under these extensive grants ; and it is,—we repeat,—by the abuse of these powers, and not by the assumption of new ones, that we shall finally, if ever, be deprived of our liberties. A single injudicious war tries the institutions of this, or any other country, more than they would be tried by the exercise of all the powers that have ever been objected to as doubtful for a thousand years. We have been led to make these remarks, because we think it important, that the people should distinctly perceive where the danger really lies, and not be induced by false alarms,—whether spread by the ignorance of friends or the arts of secret foes,—to bestow their attention on matters of minor consequence, while they leave the posts that require defence at the mercy of the enemy. But without dwelling any longer on this subject, which, however, would admit of a much fuller development, we proceed to resume the course of our narration.

In the first Message which President Monroe transmitted to Congress at the opening of the session of 1817–18, he stated, as we have remarked above, that the General Government did not possess the power of making internal improvements. In the March following, Mr. Clay moved in the House of Representatives a resolution, declaring that the General Government has power under the Constitution to appropriate money for the construction of post-roads, military roads, and canals. The two opinions were thus fairly put in issue before the great council of the nation, and the subject was debated for several days with a zeal and perseverance proportioned to its real or supposed importance. Mr. Clay finally carried his motion by a majority of ninety to seventy-five, and from that time forwards, the question may be considered as having been settled. The friends of Internal Improvement proceeded for several years, in the face of a strong opposition, to carry their principles

into practical effect, and particularly to lay out and complete the great Cumberland road. Mr. Clay was the moving spirit in all these measures, and is fairly entitled to the credit, whatever it may be, of their adoption and success. On the 16th of January, 1824, just before the close of Mr. Monroe's administration, and his own entrance into the department of State, he made his last speech in Congress upon this subject, and immediately on a bill authorizing the President to effect certain surveys and estimates for roads and canals. On this occasion, Mr. Monroe brought forward, in a long and elaborate Message, the singular doctrine alluded to above, that the General Government has the power of appropriating money for internal improvements, but not of expending the money so appropriated, which can only be laid out under the direction of the States. It is needless to point out the palpable errors and inconsistencies of this theory, which was triumphantly refuted by Mr. Clay, and which made no impression on the House or the people. Under the late administration, of which Mr. Clay was a prominent member, the system of Internal Improvement obtained, for the first time, the advantage of an Executive sanction, which with some vacillations, attributable to mere party manœuvring, has been continued to it under the present administration, so that it may now be regarded as the settled policy of the country. As a proof of the high estimation in which the efforts of its great champion are held in the West, it may be mentioned, that a large and beautiful monument of stone has been erected on the Cumberland road, surmounted by a figure representing the Genius of Liberty, and inscribed with the name of **HENRY CLAY**.

If the objection of a want of constitutional power were not tenable in its application to the making of internal improvements,—where it has a shadow of plausibility,—it was obviously still less so in its application to the other great branch of the American System, commonly called the Protecting Policy, where even this shadow is altogether wanting. The policy had in fact been avowed and acted on by every administration, for a period of thirty years after the commencement of the Government, before it was even questioned,—a length of time sufficient, as we remarked above, to give it the authority of prescription, if there is ever to be any thing settled in our political practice. The objection, though now insisted on to the exclusion of every other by the opponents of this policy, was taken for the first

time by Mr. P. P. Barbour, of Virginia, at the close of the debate in the House of Representatives, on the tariff of 1824, and does not appear to have been considered at that time as a leading point in the argument. As the force of all other objections founded in considerations of expediency, has been destroyed by the experience of the advantages accruing from domestic manufactures, this has gradually come to be regarded by their opponents as the principal one, and has at last, by being viewed under a strong excitement, been so much magnified, that the pretended encroachments of the Federal Government in this particular, are represented by a pretty numerous party in one of the States as a sufficient justification for open resistance. The futility of the objection may be made apparent in a very few words. The power of laying taxes is not incidental, or inferred by implication from any of the general clauses, but specifically given by the Constitution. The exercise of it from improper motives, or for improper purposes, is therefore not the assumption of a power not given by the Constitution, but the abuse of one that is given. Instead of being the 'deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of powers not granted by the compact,' which, in the language of the Virginia resolutions, would justify a resort to *nullification*, it is an exercise of the first named, and one of the most important of the powers specifically granted by the compact.

It is said, indeed, that the purposes for which taxes are to be laid, are specified in the Constitution; that the protection of domestic industry is not among the number, and that duties imposed with that view, though in form constitutional, are therefore inconsistent with the spirit of the national compact. Those who make such remarks apparently forget, that the objection of a want of constitutional power is in its nature wholly formal, like a plea to the jurisdiction in a court of law. The moment they admit that the protecting policy is consistent with the form of the Constitution, they waive the objection of a want of constitutional power, and place the question on its proper ground of expediency,—has the power of laying taxes, which is given by the Constitution, been rightfully exercised, or has it been abused? But independently of this consideration, let us look at the limits supposed to be set to the power of laying taxes, by the language of the Constitution. 'Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes for the purpose of paying the public debts, and *providing for the common defence and general*

welfare.' To decide what measures will promote the general welfare, is left entirely to the discretion of the Government. Is it possible to conceive of a grant of power more complete and unlimited? Here is no construction,—no implication. The plain letter of the Constitution gives to the General Government the right of laying taxes for any purpose which they may deem expedient for the promotion of the general welfare. How, then, is it possible, for gentlemen, with their eyes open, and the Constitution before them, to raise the suggestion of a want of constitutional power to impose taxes for the promotion of domestic industry? If, as they say, the protection of domestic industry does not serve to promote the general welfare, Congress, in imposing duties for this purpose, have made an improper exercise of the discretion committed to them by the Constitution. What is the remedy? The same that is provided against the effects of the improper exercise of any constitutional power,—of an unjust war,—a ruinous treaty,—an unprincipled proscription of faithful public servants. The remedies are the ballot-box,—impeachment,—and, if the urgency of the case require a resort to it,—rebellion.

The objection of a want of constitutional power, has not, therefore, in its application to the protecting policy, the slightest appearance of plausibility. It is even admitted, that it could not be sustained in a court of law. Is it not wonderful, then, that gentlemen of distinguished talent, should be found, on the occasion of the exercise by the General Government, of a power specifically granted by the letter of the Constitution, recommending a course, which,—on their own theory,—is only to be resorted to, in the case of ‘a deliberate, palpable, and dangerous exercise of powers not granted by the compact?’ Why not rather say at once, that the case is one of so flagrant an *abuse of power*, as to justify the citizens, who are aggrieved by it, in open resistance? This is what is really meant. This assertion, however groundless in fact, would at least be couched in plain, manly, intelligible language. But then avowed resistance, if unsuccessful, brings upon those who are engaged in it, certain awkward consequences, which we need not here specify, and which the nullifiers would willingly avoid. Like Macbeth in the play, they ‘would not play false, and yet would wrongly win.’ The object, in short, seems to be to invent a new kind of rebellion, which, if successful, will redress their supposed grievances; if unsuccessful, will permit them to

sleep quietly in their beds as before. This was not the conduct nor the language of their noble progenitors of 1776, from whom they seem to have degenerated as much in manly firmness, as they have in patriotism, good sense, and a correct understanding of the principles of natural and constitutional liberty.

So much for the objection to the protecting policy now so loudly insisted on, which is founded in the supposed want of constitutional powers in Congress. That of inexpediency, though latterly almost abandoned, and in itself far from being very plausible, is yet, in our opinion, somewhat more so than the other, and may perhaps be thought to deserve on this occasion a passing notice. We are told then on the one hand, that it is inexpedient to endeavor to protect and encourage manufactures, because manufactures are themselves unnecessary. It is of no importance whether the cultivator sells his products abroad or at home, provided he get a good price for them. On the other hand we are told, that if manufactures be,—as is affirmed,—really a profitable and useful employment of labor and capital, they do not need protection and encouragement, because individual capitalists will engage in them with a view to their own interests. Every establishment that is really useful to the community, must, and will exist, by the mere force of circumstances, and without any aid or intervention of Government. To one or the other of these propositions, may be reduced, we believe, all that has been said in the way of objection to the protecting policy, on the score of inexpediency.

The fallacy of both these is easily shown. As to the former, let us imagine two bordering States of the same extent, fertility and of course capacity for supporting population. Let us suppose them to be both agricultural communities, but that one is devoted exclusively to agriculture, while the other contains the manufactures which supply the demand of both; and let us further suppose, that there exists between them a perfect and unshackled freedom of intercourse, unembarrassed by the smallest duty. What would be the consequence? The cultivators of both these States, after consuming themselves such of their products as they had occasion for, would send the surplus to the manufacturing State. Suppose, for argument's sake, that this surplus is one third of the whole produce, and how would the account stand? The manufacturing community

would consume two thirds of the whole produce of both, while the exclusively agricultural community would consume only one. Their respective degrees of population and wealth would be of course in the same proportion ; that is, the exclusively agricultural State, with a territory of equal extent and fertility, and of course with an equal capacity for supporting population and acquiring political power, would possess just one half of the population, wealth, and political power belonging to its more sagacious neighbor. What, again, would be the further consequence ? The exclusively agricultural community would be politically at the mercy of the other ; and in the course of events would naturally be conquered by it, and become its appendage. And yet the cultivators in both, through all the stages of their progress, sell their produce at the same price. The respective situations of these two supposed communities, are in fact very nearly those of Great Britain and Ireland. These two islands are nearly equal in geographical extent and fertility of soil ; but the former has a population about twice as large as that of the latter, a superiority in wealth still more decisive, and so complete a preponderance of political power, that for several centuries past, Ireland has been no better than a conquered province. The only reason, that can be assigned for these differences, is the greater extent to which the resources of Great Britain have been developed by an assiduous cultivation of all the various departments of art and science.

So much for the proposition, that it is of no importance to the community whether the cultivator sell his produce abroad or at home, provided he get a good price for it. The other is,—as we have stated it above,—the ancient *let-me-alone* doctrine of the French merchants. If manufactures be really a profitable and useful employment of capital, they do not require protection, because individuals will engage in them with a view to their own interests. Every citizen, if left to take his course, will do better for himself than the Government can do for him. The answer to this objection is now as familiar as the objection itself. The individual will, no doubt, manage his own concerns better than the Government can manage them for him, and under any given circumstances, will in general make the best possible investment of his property. But he can only look to his own interest, and cannot consult the good of the community any farther than it is necessarily implied in his own. The

object of Government, on the other hand, in making laws on economical subjects, is to enable the individual, with equal profit to himself, to invest his capital in a manner more beneficial to the community than he otherwise would. The result of the principle contended for, if carried out fully into practice, would be to abolish entirely all government and all society, and to place men in a state of individual independence, which has sometimes, though very improperly, been called a state of nature, but which, in fact, never did and never can exist anywhere in practice. Man is by nature a social as well as an individual being. There is no part of the conduct of individuals which it is not the right and the duty of society, to a certain extent, to control and regulate ; and so far are their economical concerns from forming an exception to this remark, that they are precisely those which constitute every where the leading object of legislation. The principle contended for is, therefore, false in itself, and even as far as it is true, is wholly inapplicable in practice. It may be admitted, that capital and labor, if left to themselves, will in general take the direction, best fitted, under the circumstances of the case, to promote the interest of the individual ; but this is one of those barren generalities which are of no use in practice, for the obvious reason, that capital and labor never are, or can be left to themselves, the direction they are to take being continually disturbed by a thousand accidental causes. The history of the world, past, present and to come, always has been, is, and always will be, made up of a series of political changes, more or less violent in their character ; of which the less important exercise a decisive influence on the course of individual industry, and the more important change it altogether. In the midst of this chaos of conflicting elements, the Government of the United States are called upon to legislate, as if this country were alone in the world, and as if the course of individual industry would always find its natural level. It is also true in physical science, that water has a tendency to find its level ; but what should we think of a ship-master, who, on the strength of this truism, should affirm that the surface of the ocean is in fact always smooth, that the mountainous waves, which at times appear to cover it, are optical illusions, and that the true art of seamanship is to carry full sail in all weathers, blow high or low ? He would of course be considered a madman. Yet such is exactly the principle of legislation recommended by the

opponents of the protecting policy to the Government of the United States. Nor is there the slightest foundation for the suggestion, that protecting duties are a tax upon the other classes of the community for the benefit of manufacturers. It is well known to all who have learned the elements of political economy, that all taxes, in whatever form imposed, operate equally upon every description of labor, and that no tax can be laid,—with whatever intention,—which shall press more heavily upon any one portion of the community than it does upon all the rest. The object of the protecting duties is to promote the general good, by enabling capitalists to invest their capital with safety in a branch of industry, which it is of the highest public importance that we should have at home. To the capitalist himself, it is a matter of entire indifference, whether his capital is employed in one way or another. He can never obtain from it, in any employment, any thing more than the average returns, which are the same in all. When, however, on the faith, and under the encouragement of legislative protection, he has in fact invested his capital in a particular branch of industry, the community are bound by the most solemn obligations, not to make this employment of it unproductive by unnecessary and capricious changes of policy.

Such is the outline of the argument upon this great question. It had been discussed in the Senate of the United States before the war, when the bill was brought in for providing ammunition and public stores; and on that occasion, Mr. Clay, as we have said above, made his first speech in Congress. The return of peace, the stagnation of foreign trade that naturally attended it, and the destruction of our infant manufactures, which had been rapidly growing up during the preceding periods of commercial restriction and war, clearly indicated the insufficiency of the protection heretofore given to domestic industry, and the absolute necessity of proceeding still farther in the same line of policy which had been marked out, at the commencement of the Government, by Washington and Hamilton, and practised upon, ever since, to a greater or less extent, by all their successors. Through the whole progress of this great work, Mr. Clay again stood forward, as the open, fearless, persevering, uncompromising champion of the cause of the country. In the earlier period, his efforts were at times partially, and even for the moment, wholly unsuccessful. In 1816, the duty on woollens, which he had succeeded in obtain-

ing in Committee of the Whole, when it came to the House, where he could not speak, was reduced. In 1819-20, the whole bill, which, with incredible exertions, he had carried through the House, was rejected in the Senate. In 1824, the struggle was renewed under better auspices, and ended in the complete triumph of the American System. On that occasion, Mr. Webster was among the principal opponents of the protecting policy in the House of Representatives. He seems, in his argument against it, to have relied chiefly upon the example of liberality, which had recently been set by Great Britain in the adoption of the Huskisson policy, without, perhaps, having sufficiently remarked,—what has since been avowed by the authors of that policy,—that their liberality extended, and was meant to extend, no further than it was consistent with a complete protection of domestic industry, in all its branches, against foreign competition. In the year 1828, this question once more came before Congress, and this time with an earnest recommendation of the policy of protection by the Executive department of the Government. Mr. Clay was no longer in Congress, but such had been the advance of public opinion since the subject was last discussed, that his absence was not felt. Notwithstanding the unwearied attempts of a violent opposition, to embarrass the measure by every means in their power, and among others, by the insertion of provisions, which they disapproved themselves, in the hope of making the whole bill unpopular in particular sections, it was carried in both Houses by handsome majorities. The geographical character of the two parties upon this subject, had,—as we have already remarked,—materially changed in the course of the discussions. The New-England capitalists, on the faith and under the encouragement of legislative protection, had made large investments in manufactures, and experience had already shown, that the prosperity of this part of the country depends exclusively upon the progress of this branch of industry. It was found, accordingly, that the Representatives from New-England,—who, on former occasions, had generally opposed the protecting policy,—were now, almost unanimously, in favor of it. Mr. Webster, in particular, now supported the bill in the Senate. On the other hand, the Representatives of the South,—who were the original advocates of the protecting policy,—partly from their habitual jealousy of the North, and partly from a mistaken apprehension that the foreign market

for their staple productions would be injured by the growth of manufactures at home, now opposed the system with a sort of passion ; and at length, after exhausting in vain every other argument against it, discovered at the close of some of the last discussions, that it was unconstitutional. This opposition has been renewed, with greater or less vigor, at each subsequent session of Congress, in attempts to obtain the repeal or reduction of the protecting duties, and will probably be continued for some time to come. In the course of the debates to which these attempts have led, the Southern members have broached, upon the floor of Congress, the wildest novelties in political economy,—some of which have been adverted to in former numbers of this journal,—and have not scrupled to affirm, that if the Government did not, without a moment's reflection, adopt these chimerical fancies, as the basis of a complete reform in the economical legislation of the country, the citizens who deemed themselves aggrieved by the existing system, would be justified in open rebellion ;—for such, as we have seen, is the real sense of the newfangled and barbarous term, *nullification*. An opposition, so violent and unreasonable as this, may be expected to exhaust itself pretty soon,—if it have not done so already,—by its own efforts. The protecting policy is fitted to promote all the great interests of the country, agricultural and commercial, as well as manufacturing, and including,—whatever they may think of it,—that of the Southern planters, whose market is obviously extended, instead of being contracted, by the growth of home manufactures. It must of course, in the end, receive the support of all these interests, as it now does of by far the greater proportion of them, and be unanimously recognised as the true policy of the country.

We have dwelt more particularly upon those parts of the American System, which dictate the expediency of opening communications by roads and canals between the different sections of the country, and of affording a legislative protection to home manufactures, because they are those to which the public attention has been, and is more particularly directed, and which are naturally the first in the order of practical application. The material wants of society, though inferior in essential importance, claim the precedence over those which belong to our moral nature, because the satisfaction of the former is an essential preliminary to that of the latter. But we should do injustice to the lofty and patriotic views of the Father of the

American System, and of those who before and since he stood forth as the champion of this great cause, have labored in support of it with more or less efficiency, if we supposed that the only object of it is to naturalize among us the production of the material comforts of life, and that the only questions connected with it, are whether the General Government have or have not a right to lay out roads and canals, and to impose duties for the protection of domestic industry. The scope and aim of this system are far more large and noble. Its leading principle is the developement of all the resources of the country, political, intellectual and moral, as well as economical. The means by which it proposes to accomplish its object, is the concurrent action of every member of the body politic, in all the various capacities in which he is called upon to exercise influence,—whether through the medium of the General, State, or Municipal Governments,—of voluntary associations for whatever end, or finally within the limited circle of his own personal concerns. A new world of boundless extent and unrivalled natural advantages, capable of maintaining a population of hundreds of millions, spreads its broad bosom before us. This is our inheritance, and with it the noble birth-right of liberty. That single attribute of our nature, by which we claim some distant resemblance to the Divinity, and rise above the control of every earthly power, except the inborn moral law of our own hearts, is here unrepressed by the vicious political institutions that have trammelled and fettered it in every other part of the world. With these unparalleled natural advantages,—with these munificent gifts of Providence at our disposal,—shall we be content to gaze forever in stupid admiration on the products of skill and science that are brought to us from other countries far less favorably situated? Shall we even, like the ignorant natives of our continent, allow foreigners to impose upon us,—as they too often do,—their glittering and worthless trinkets for the real jewels of art and science? The ultimate objects to which our efforts should be directed are, after all, the developement and freedom of the mind. Are the thoughts, the opinions, the feelings that are generated in the impure atmosphere of Europe, fit to be the guides of life in this young, rising, and generous republic? Shall we drink in forever as our daily nutriment, the selfish, sordid, poisonous doctrines that have corrupted the whole literature of the old world, and are wasted [to us in ship-loads

by every wind that blows from that quarter? Shall we practically confess, that we can do nothing more than produce the rude material,—the physical, unimproved man,—and that we must leave it to the superior capacities of enemies and rivals to put on the stamp and fashion,—to breathe in the spirit that gives understanding? Shall we, in short, with the name of national existence, be forever, in substance,—in all that relates to the higher departments of our nature,—the Colonies of Europe? If not, by what means can we accomplish our emancipation? Is it by eternally contending among ourselves about minute points of difference concerning the respective limits of the authorities of the General and State Governments, when the common objects for which both are to be exerted are substantially the same? Is it not rather by the vigorous, untiring, concurrent exertions of individuals, corporations, constituted bodies politic within their respective appropriate spheres? In the vast vineyard in which we labor, there is ample and honorable employment for all. There are numerous objects, which can only be effected by the direct agency of the Federal Government, and for the accomplishment of these the Federal Government has been clothed with all the necessary powers. But is there no room left for the activity of the States? We know what they can do by seeing what they have done. Is the **CLINTON CANAL** a less magnificent, by which we mean a less really useful achievement, than the Cumberland road? Instead of wasting their time, their labor, their talents, their best and highest feelings in the truly unprofitable attempt to *prevent* each other from concurring in the accomplishment of the common objects of all, let the respective friends of State Rights and of the Federal Constitution rather aid, encourage, and stimulate each other to do as much as possible, and the great work of Internal Improvement will then go on steadily, rapidly, harmoniously, to its final consummation in the complete intellectual, moral, economical, and political independence of the country.

These two important measures, or rather schemes of policy,—the foundation of our relations with the Spanish American States, and the establishment of the American System,—in both which, as we have seen, Mr. Clay took the lead,—must affect essentially and permanently the condition of this continent, and will recommend his name to the respect and gratitude of posterity. In other affairs of equal or even still supe-

rior temporary interest,—particularly in that of the admission of a portion of the territory of Missouri into the Union as a State,—his influence was equally conspicuous. Mr. Prentice has a very interesting chapter on this subject, of which we would gladly give an abstract; but the length to which this article has already extended, makes it necessary that we should hasten to a close; and we must content ourselves with referring the reader for information on this and several other curious topics to the work itself.

Having stood before the country for at least ten years as the acknowledged leader in the House of Representatives, and having served with success in other stations of the highest trust, it was not unnatural, that when Mr. Monroe retired from the Presidency, Mr. Clay should have been among the persons proposed as his successor. He was, however, still somewhat young to appear as a candidate for that office, and encountered of course the competition of other statesmen more advanced in age. The acknowledged talents and various accomplishments of Mr. Adams,—his long and faithful labors in the diplomatic service, terminated and crowned as they had been by his brilliant and successful negotiations at Ghent, which extorted at the time the reluctant admiration not only of hostile statesmen abroad, but of his bitterest and most rancorous personal enemies at home;—his able administration for eight years of the Department of State, signalized by the establishment of our relations with Spanish America, in regard to which he had acted in the Executive branch of the Government the same part which Mr. Clay had performed in Congress,—by the settlement of the Southern boundary and the acquisition of Florida;—his known generosity of spirit and inflexible uprightness of purpose;—gave him an almost irresistible claim to the suffrages of the people, which, in the minds of all good men, was strengthened by a grateful recollection of the revolutionary services of his venerated father. On the other hand, the glare of military success,—which always exercises so powerful an influence on the uninformed and unreflecting part of the community,—had invested the name of General Jackson with a good deal of popular favor. Of the qualifications which recommended Mr. Crawford as a candidate for this transcendent dignity, we are not particularly informed. After a very short career, in which he had exhibited no pre-eminence of talent, either as a Senator or a diplomatist, he had been placed in the

Treasury Department by Mr. Monroe, where he had done nothing more than to go through,—not always in the most accurate manner,—with the habitual and easy *routine* of the place. His personal pretensions were of course insignificant; but his political principles were understood to be of a *radical* cast, and this circumstance probably recommended him to certain managers as a person under whose auspices they might attempt, with some prospect of success, to wield the machinery of the old democratic party. Another Southern statesman of distinguished talent and elevated character, but much younger than even Mr. Clay, was exhibited for a moment as a candidate, but was almost immediately withdrawn by his friends. In this conflict of opposing claims,—each sustained by strong sectional interests,—it was of course impossible that a choice should be made by the people. The question, which of the four principal candidates should be brought before the House of Representatives, was naturally determined in part by accident; and it so happened that Mr. Clay,—whose personal pretensions were second only to those of Mr. Adams,—was not among the number. His great influence in the House of Representatives rendered him in a manner the arbiter between the three more successful competitors. The choice was, however, a very easy one. There could be no hesitation about the comparative qualifications of General Jackson and Mr. Adams for the Presidency of the United States; and had the case been different with respect to Mr. Crawford, (which it would not have been, in the mind of any competent judge,) the state of his health was such, as to put him entirely out of the question. The doctrine since contended for by some, that the House were bound to elect the individual who had the highest number of votes, is too absurd to require refutation. Mr. Clay decided, as every other person of common sense and common integrity would have done, under the same circumstances. His character and position in the country designated him as the only candidate for the Department of State, which was offered him by Mr. Adams, as it would have been by any President, and which he accepted. By force of management, a large proportion of the adherents of the three disappointed candidates were induced to unite in opposition to the new administration, which, at the next following election,—not much to the credit of the people of the United States

on the score of good sense,—they succeeded in overthrowing. Posterity will read the history of these transactions with the same sentiments with which we now read that of the ostracism of Aristides, or the disgrace of the Duke of Marlborough. In the course of the controversy that arose on this subject, the opposition presses,—with the usual recklessness of party animosity,—made no scruple of charging Mr. Clay with corruption. It was obvious to all, who were not completely blinded by passion and prejudice, that any other course than that which he took, would have afforded unequivocal evidence of corruption of the basest kind. The charge was of course not believed for a moment by any impartial man, and the complete and most satisfactory refutation of it which Mr. Clay condescended to furnish in several publications, was, for all such persons, entirely superfluous.

It is not our purpose, however, to enlarge on topics connected with the personal disputes of the day; and as the details of the administration by Mr. Clay of the Department of State are familiarly known to our readers, we shall here close this rapid survey of his political life. Whether it will be his fortune to end it in uninterrupted retirement, or to appear again upon the political theatre in a still higher character than any which he has yet sustained, is a question of small importance to himself, although, in our opinion, of much to the country. In the ordinary peaceful progress of events, which we may venture to hope will not be disturbed for many years to come, a President of the United States has but little opportunity of extending the reputation by which he has raised himself to that dignity. Mr. Clay has already recommended his name to the future historian as a leading actor in the most important political revolutions of the age,—as the founder of a new era in the economical policy of his own country. The honor of the Presidency,—eminent as it undoubtedly is,—can add nothing to such distinction. His name is one, of which the absence from our list of Presidents would be remarked in after times much more than its presence there; as the philosophic Roman historian observes of the statues of Brutus and Cassius, which one of the profligate emperors was afraid to produce in some procession, where he paraded those of most of the heroes and patriots of the Republic, that they were only the more conspicuous from not being seen. *Eo magis refulgebant, quod non videbantur.*

It may, perhaps, be expected, that we should offer before we close, some remarks upon the peculiar characteristics that distinguish Mr. Clay as a statesman and an orator; but we doubt whether much can be added in this way to the impression produced by a survey of his political career. The only test of eloquence is effect, and the talent of a statesman is best shown by an account of the principles he professes and the measures he recommends. It may be said, however, in general, that Mr. Clay is particularly remarkable, as a politician, for a large and comprehensive scope of mind. He looks at his subject from an elevated point,—takes in at one view all the various considerations that bear upon it, and is thus enabled to give to each its proper relative importance. This faculty is in him the more commendable, inasmuch as it is not the natural result of the professional pursuits to which a large part of his life has been devoted. The ordinary effect of long practice at the bar, is rather to encourage the habit of minute distinctions founded in a nice observation of details, which, though unimportant to the merits of a case, are sometimes decisive of its fate in a court of justice. It has, accordingly, often been remarked in England, that the most eminent lawyers have rarely sustained in Parliament the reputation which they had previously acquired at the bar; and it can hardly be doubted, that it is in consequence of the large number of gentlemen of this profession in Congress, that the regular course of business is so often interrupted by captious and quibbling debates upon questions of constitutional power. A large and comprehensive view of political affairs is also of necessity the only correct one. Setting aside the case of actual corruption, which occurs much less frequently than is commonly supposed, the ordinary source of error is a partial and limited view of the subject under consideration. Personal, local, sectional interests and feelings, absorb the attention and direct the conduct of men of narrow minds. It is only by rising above this limited sphere of vision, and looking exclusively to the general good of the whole, that we are able to discover, under any given circumstances, the true course of policy. This faculty has been,—as we have said,—exhibited in a remarkable manner by Mr. Clay. The eloquence by which he acquired so much influence over his contemporaries, and for a long time swayed in a manner at will the debates in the House of Representatives, is of a warm and

popular, rather than strictly argumentative cast. His published speeches, probably, do but little justice to it. Some of the best which he ever made,—as, for example, those upon the Missouri Question,—have never been reported; and of those that are reported at length, few, we believe, have been corrected by himself. Even when a speech is reported with care by the speaker himself, and supposing him, which is seldom the case, to be equally distinguished for written and oral eloquence, his work will after all afford a very faint notion of the means, which produced the mighty effect. Who can undertake to represent in written forms of words, the flashing eye,—the quivering lip,—the graceful gesture,—the rich, deep, impassioned tones that thrill with a sort of super-human power to the inmost recesses of the heart? These are, after all, the life and spirit of eloquence; the published speech is a mere skeleton. Those of Mr. Clay, however inadequately they may represent the spoken originals, will compare advantageously with the best specimens of this kind of composition. They have not the deep philosophy of Burke and Mackintosh, nor the high rhetorical finish of Canning; but belong rather to the school of natural and practical orators, which comprehends in England such men as Pitt, Fox, Castlereagh, and Burdett, and in this country almost all who have at any time obtained a reputation for eloquence. One of the most elaborate and substantial of Mr. Clay's reported speeches, is that upon the tariff of 1824. It is, in fact, a complete treatise upon the subject, and though the doctrine may not be in every part free from exception, presents, in the main, a masterly view of the true economical policy of the country. The work before us contains a number of extracts from this and the other speeches, selected in general with much judgment; but such fragments hardly give a better idea of the entire work, than the single brick in the Greek fable of the house from which it was taken, and of which it was to serve as a specimen. Rather than attempt to satisfy in this way the expectations that may have been raised in the minds of any of our readers by the present article, we would refer them for the only fair representation that can be conveyed in print,—and that a very imperfect one,—of the speeches of this accomplished orator, to the published collection, of which they will find some notice in a preceding number of this Journal.